

MILITARIZATION AND LOCAL RESISTANCE : HISTORY OF TNI INTERVENTIONS IN PAPUA CONFLICT SINCE INTERGRATION 1969

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Abstract

The purpose of this study clearly underlines its originality by examining the history of the Indonesian National Army (TNI) intervention in Papua and the dynamics of community resistance over the past five decades. The goal is to understand the pattern of state policy involving militarisation, its impact on local communities, and how resistance is formed in response to such policies. The design and methodology approach used in this study is a historical qualitative approach, relying on archival studies, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. This method ensures empirical data-based analysis and the relevance of historical context to the dynamics of the Papua conflict. Findings of the study identified consistent government patterns in securitisation policies, political repression, and social control, strengthened by military presence. This policy not only fails to resolve conflicts but also strengthens community resistance and extends the cycle of distrust between the government and local communities. The Originality/Value of the study of civil-military relations and conflict resolution, emphasising the need for alternative approaches such as demilitarisation and recognition-based dialogue towards local agencies. Practically, these implications emphasize the importance of more inclusive and humanist policy reforms to ease tensions in Papua.

Keywords: militarisation, Papua conflict, TNI intervention, local resistance, civil-military relations.

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini secara jelas menekankan orisinalitasnya dengan menelaah sejarah intervensi Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) di Papua serta dinamika perlawanan masyarakat selama lima dekade terakhir. Tujuannya adalah untuk memahami pola kebijakan negara yang melibatkan militerisasi, dampaknya terhadap masyarakat lokal, dan bagaimana perlawanan terbentuk sebagai respons terhadap kebijakan tersebut. Desain dan pendekatan metodologi yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif historis, dengan mengandalkan studi arsip, analisis dokumen, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur. Metode ini memastikan analisis berbasis data empiris serta relevansi konteks historis terhadap dinamika konflik Papua. Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi adanya pola yang konsisten dalam kebijakan pemerintah berupa sekuritisasi, represi politik, dan kontrol sosial yang diperkuat oleh keberadaan militer. Kebijakan ini tidak hanya gagal menyelesaikan konflik, tetapi juga memperkuat perlawanan masyarakat dan memperpanjang siklus ketidakpercayaan antara pemerintah dan masyarakat lokal. Orisinalitas/Nilai dari penelitian ini terletak pada kajian hubungan sipil-militer dan resolusi konflik, dengan menekankan perlunya pendekatan alternatif seperti demiliterisasi dan dialog berbasis pengakuan terhadap aktor lokal. Secara praktis, implikasi ini menegaskan pentingnya reformasi kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan humanis untuk meredakan ketegangan di Papua.

Kata kunci: militerisasi, konflik Papua, intervensi TNI, perlawanan lokal, hubungan sipil-militer.



1. BACKGROUND

The conflict that took place in Papua since its integration into the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in 1969 has become a complex issue, involving various political, social and economic aspects. One of the important dimensions in this conflict is the role of the Indonesian National Army (TNI), who is the main actor in the handling of conflicts and the management of stability in the region. According to the CNN Indonesia (CNN Indonesia, 2021), the military role in this conflict has led to an increase in incidents of violence in Papua over the past few decades.

The urgency to understand the military role in the Papuan conflict is increasing as tensions escalate between the government and separatist groups. Chehafni Damanik (2023) notes that most human rights violations in Papua in the past decade involve military actors. This suggests that the dominant security approach often ignores constructive dialogue, creating a repeated cycle of violence. Although many previous studies have focused on the political and economic dimensions of conflict, studies that specifically highlight the role of militarization since Papua's integration in 1969 until its impact on local resistance dynamics is rare. The study aims to explore the history of military intervention in Papua, identify its impact on conflict dynamics, and analyze various forms of local resistance in response to militarization policies.

With a historical-critical approach supported by secondary data from human rights reports, government documents and academic literature, the study is expected to provide a new perspective on understanding Papua's issues. In addition, the study aims to provide more inclusive and dialog-based policy recommendations to resolve conflicts peacefully and sustainably. An approach that prioritizes respect for human rights and social justice is believed to reduce tensions and strengthen stability in the Papua region (Effendi & Panjaitan, 2021)

Recent data shows that by 2021, there were 56 violent incidents involving security forces in Papua (Talao, 2009). This figure confirms the importance of security policy reforms that not only focus on stability, but also on the protection of the rights of the Papuan people. Through historical exploration and in-depth analysis, this article is expected to contribute significantly to the efforts to resolve the fair and inclusive Papuan conflict.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis in this article uses the theory of militarization as the main foundation, which highlights how the military becomes the dominant actor in the dynamics of domestic security, especially in the context of internal conflicts in developing countries. This theory highlights that security approaches are often used as a tool to maintain state control, even at the expense of civil society rights (Kusno et al., 2022). This perspective is relevant in understanding how the Indonesian government uses militarization in Papua not only to maintain physical security but also to maintain political and social dominance over the region.

The concept of internal colonialism provides an additional framework to explain how countries use militarization practices to control areas considered peripheral or suburbs. In the Papuan context, the concept describes the subordination of indigenous peoples through policies that create structural inequality, including political, economic and cultural marginalization (Pratama & Hafiz, 2021). The country's dominance sparked diverse local



resistance, from peaceful action to armed resistance, in response to perceived unfair practices.

This article also uses a historical-empirical approach to tracing the chronology of military intervention in Papua since 1969. This approach enables exploration of patterns of military intervention and its impact on local communities through the analysis of historical documents, human rights reports, and academic literature. This information is analyzed thematically to identify key trends in militarization and local response. Thus, this article provides a holistic analysis that integrates historical and contemporary dimensions to understand the complexity of conflicts in Papua thoroughly (Chehafni Damanik, 2023).

3. METHOD

This article uses a qualitative approach with the study method of library as the main analysis framework. Library studies are chosen because of the nature of topics that rely on historical, chronological, and analytical searches of various literatures, official documents, reports, and previous research results. This approach allows for a deep exploration of the issue of militarization in Papua, especially in uncovering patterns of military intervention and local responses from a variety of perspectives. This type of qualitative research focuses on interpretation of meaning in certain social and political contexts, making it relevant to analyze complex conflicts such as Papua (A. F. Kurnia et al., 2021)

The data sources used include academic literature such as journals, books, government reports, and international and non-governmental organisations documents published in the 2013–2025 period to ensure the relevance and novelty of data. Data collection techniques are performed with academic database search such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and national journal portals such as SINTA. Data was also obtained from reports such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documenting human rights conditions in Papua.

The main focus is to choose a source that contains empirical facts and critical analysis (Kurnia, 2021) Data analysis procedures involve three main stages: (1) Data coding, namely organizing information from various sources into thematic categories such as militarization, state control, and local resistance; (2) Synthesification, namely summarizing thematic data and identifying common patterns or contradictions in literature; and (3) Critical analysis, namely linking data with militarization theory, internal colonialism, and critical security approaches. This process is carried out by considering the internal and external validity of data to ensure the results of the research are reliable (Abrar, 2021) .

The study did not involve a human subject or sample directly because it focused on documents and secondary sources. However, there are strict data selection criteria to ensure the quality of the research, including using only sources published by trusted authors, reputable journals, and official reports. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where only data relevant to the Papuan context is selected. This ensures that the results of the research reflect actual conditions and can support the established analytical objectives (Kusuma et al., 2022)

This method provides significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this approach of library study enriches understanding of the interaction between militarization and local resistance in the context of internal colonialism. Practically speaking, the results of this study are expected to be the basis of policy recommendations to reduce conflicts in Papua through an inclusive political justice and dialogue-based approach. Thus, this research contributes to more comprehensive and sustainable conflict resolution efforts.



History of Integration and Early Militarization

The Papua integration process into Indonesia through the Popular Decision of People's Opinion (Pepera) in 1969 became one of the most controversial moments in Indonesian political history. Implemented under UN supervision, Pepera is expected to vote for Papuan people to determine their political status. However, the implementation was criticized as undemocratic as it involved only about 1,025 people's representatives elected by the government. Many parties, including human rights activists and historians, argue that the process does not reflect the aspirations of the Papuan people as a whole. This is reflected in various studies showing the existence of intimidation by the military during the process (Setiawan & Sa'diyah, 2022).

After integration, the military plays a key role in the security of Papua. In the early days of integration, the Indonesian government faced a variety of challenges, including local dissatisfaction and separatist threats. To maintain the stability of the region, the military is often empowered to carry out intensive security operations. This includes the deployment of military garrisons in several strategic areas of Papua. Strong military presence often leads to tensions with local communities, who feel that this approach is too repressive (Sa'diyah, 2022). The appearance of the Free Papua Organization (OPM) as a form of resistance to this integration reflects the deep frustration of some of the Papuan people. The organization was established to fight for the right to self-determination which is considered ignored in Pepera. Originally, OPM resistance was carried out through peaceful means, but gradually developed into an armed movement due to the repression experienced by the Indonesian government. The OPM movement demonstrates a complex relationship between Papuan cultural identity and political dynamics at the national level (Adiprasetyo & Taqiyya, 2023).

In addition, the dynamics of militarization in Papua cannot be separated from the country's security approach. This highly centralized approach is considered to ignore the socio-cultural factors of Papuan society, which emphasizes the importance of a more humanist approach. As a result of this often-using approach to military force is the increasing tension and alienation among Papuan communities, which exacerbate the conflict. Recent studies show that non-military approaches such as constructive dialogue and community-based development are more effective in reducing conflict (Kirsch, 2002).

Overall, the early history of Papua integration and significant military roles underscores the long challenges of achieving stability and harmony in the region. Strategic decisions such as Pepera 1969 to the management of conflicts with OPM showed the importance of more inclusive and social justice-based engagement to solve the problem that continues to this day.

Militarization Intensification: 1970–1998 (*Orde Baru*)

In the New Order era, militarization in Papua experienced significant intensification. Military operations on a large scale are carried out to address the threat of separatism that is



considered to be harmful to national integration. The deployment of TNI forces across the Papua region is expanded to monitor community activities and prevent mobilization of resistance. Operations such as Operation Koteka (1977–1978) showed repressive efforts to eradicate separatist movements at the expense of many civilians (Adiprasetyo & Taqiyya, 2023).

Government development policies in Papua are often accompanied by repressive actions against local political expression. The transmigration and exploitation programs of natural resources are considered by the Papuan people as a form of internal colonialism, which aggravates social and economic inequality. Many Papuans feel marginalized by the policy, which benefits more immigrants than the indigenous population (F. A. Kurnia et al., 2021).

The direct impact of this militarization intensification is felt by civil society in the form of systemic human rights violations. Repressive actions by military personnel often lead to arbitrary arrests, murders, and forced disappearances. These cases are rarely processed legally, thus aggravating the sense of injustice among Papuans (Stange, 2019).

Massive militaryization also led to large amounts of internal displacement, especially in conflict areas such as Paniai and Wamena. Locals often have to leave their homes to avoid clashes between TNI forces and separatists. As a result, there is stigmatization of Papuan people as separatists or anti-nationals, which further exacerbate their social marginalization (Robie, 2016).

The New Order's repressive approach to Papua creates deep wounds that are still felt today. The brutal military operation not only failed to stop the resistance, but also strengthened the solidarity of the Papuan people in demanding their political and social rights. This created the foundation for the emergence of new post-New Order dynamics, characterized by the demands of special autonomy and political reform.

New Reforms and Dynamics: 1998–Now

The Reformation era brings new hope to the Papuan people through decentralization and the granting of *Otonomi Khusus* (Otsus). Otsus Papua, which was passed in 2001, aims to give local governments greater authority to manage resources and resolve local conflicts. However, Otsus implementation is often considered a failure due to lack of supervision, corruption and nonconformity with the aspirations of the Papuan people (Septiadi et al., 2022).

The change in the tactics of the TNI in the face of resistance in Papua is a hallmark of the Reformation era. A territorial approach that promotes local infrastructure and intelligence development is used to reduce armed conflicts. Although this approach demonstrates some success in dampening the escalation of conflict, criticism remains in relation to the lack of substantive political dialogue (Sukmana & Irawati, 2023).



Important incidents such as the conflict in Nduga (2018) and Intan Jaya (2020) indicate that armed conflicts are still part of Papua's reality. Attacks on infrastructure workers and harsh military responses showed tensions between development and security. These incidents are a reminder that the military approach without dialogue extends only to the conflict (Robie, 2016).

Despite some progress, the Reformation has not been able to address the root causes of conflict in Papua, such as historical injustice, social marginalization, and recognition of cultural identity. Reconciliation efforts through non-military approaches are minimal, while special autonomy is often viewed as a temporary solution without regard to structural changes (Sukmana & Irawati, 2023)

In conclusion, although the Reformation era brought new dynamics to the management of conflicts in Papua, a more inclusive and based approach to social justice remains an urgent need. The Government of Indonesia needs to consider political dialogue involving all stakeholders as a concrete step towards sustainable resolution of conflict.

Local Resistance and Civil Mobilization

The resistance strategy in Papua has undergone significant evolution of armed resistance to international advocacy. Groups such as the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) are turning to international diplomacy to attract world attention to human rights violations in Papua. These changes reflect the desire to seek wider global support than relying on armed conflicts (Taskarina & Veronika, 2021).

The younger generation of Papua now plays an important role in civil mobilization and advocacy. Through social media and international networks, they have successfully raised Papua's issues to a global level, including at forums such as the United Nations. The role of the Papuan diaspora is also increasingly significant in strengthening the narrative of human rights and independence struggle (Mampioper, 2016).

Civil society organizations, including churches and NGOs, have a major contribution in supporting Papuan communities. The Church is often a shelter and advocacy for victims of human rights abuses. In addition, local and international NGO networks play a role in putting pressure on the government to respect human rights in Papua (Fikriyah & Weninggalih, 2023).

Civil mobilization efforts also reflect the spirit of peaceful resistance focused on advocacy and education. These programs aim to strengthen the capacity of the Papuan people to voice their rights without the use of violence. This approach is increasingly relevant amid criticism of a military approach that only exacerbates conflict (Putri et al., 2022).

Through civil mobilization and new resistance strategies, Papuans demonstrate that their struggle is not only related to political independence, but also recognition of cultural



identity and human rights. This effort provides hope for a more peaceful and sustainable resolution of conflict.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Results

In the New Order era, the intensification of militarization became increasingly dominant with the placement of more than 15,000 personnel in Papua in the late 1990s (Aryeno et al., 2022). The presence of security forces covers almost the entire sectors of people's lives, where development policies are often used to limit local political expression. As a result, there has been an increase in human rights violations such as forced disappearance and extrajudicial killings, which are widely documented by human rights organizations.

Periode	Case of Human Rights Violation	Type of Violation	Impacts
1969 - 1980	120	Forced Disappearance and Murder	Trauma and Fear
1981 - 1998	310	Torture and Mass Expulsion	Extensive Refugees
1999 - 2023	450	Shooting dan Land Rooting	stigmatization and inequality

The Reformation period brought about a change in tactics through the implementation of Papua Special Autonomy in 2001. However, this study suggests that the implementation of the policy is not optimal, with 40% of special autonomy funds reported to be ineffective or used (BPS Papua, 2022). In addition, although the TNI changed its approach by emphasizing intelligence development and operations, incidents such as armed conflict in Nduga in 2018 showed that the conflict continued despite changing tactics.

On the other hand, local resistance also underwent the transformation of the armed movement into an international advocacy led by the Papuan diaspora and young activists (Pratama & Hafiz, 2021b). The role of churches and NGOs in promoting human rights is a critical factor in pressing governments to commit to peaceful dialogue. However, the study also found the negative impact of militarization on local communities, including psychological trauma, stigmatization, and mass displacement, particularly in conflict areas such as Intan Jaya (Yusuf et al., 2023).

Field Survey noted that 68% of Papuans feel insecure due to intensive military presence, although security is often the main reason for intervention (Yusuf et al., 2023). The data of human rights violations collected support the findings that the military approach exacerbates the conflict, as Fakihudin (2021) However, the study adds a new perspective on the positive roles of non-state actors, such as churches and NGOs, which were previously under discussion. The findings affirmed the importance of the transition from a militaristic approach to a transitional justice-based approach and political dialogue. In addition, the

results of the study expanded the literature of Papua conflict with a focus on the role of local and international actors in framing human rights narratives.

b. Discussion

The study revealed that military interventions in Papua have strong correlations with increasing violence, suggesting that coercive approaches actually aggravate conflicts instead of defusing them. This is in line with the social conflict theory of Johan Galtung emphasizing that repressive approaches tend to strengthen structural and cultural conflicts rather than resolve them (Sa'diyah, 2022). The implications of the findings highlight the need to reduce the military's role in the resolution of the conflict and replace it with inclusive dialogue-based strategies and third-party mediation. However, previous research by World Report, (2022) showed that understanding the impact of this policy requires more consistent longitudinal data to analyze its effects in the long run.

Local resistance in Papua is also found to have significant cultural dimensions. Cultural elements are often used by indigenous peoples as a symbol of resistance to external domination, describing how cultural identity becomes an effective tool of struggle. The findings are relevant to Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural symbols that suggest that culture is often used as a tool of resistance to maintain collective identity and rights (Adiprasetio & Taqiyya, 2023). Therefore, government policies towards Papua should be more sensitive to the cultural dimension, especially in the context of recognizing indigenous rights and the implementation of regional autonomy.

Human Rights violations, such as forced disappearance and restrictions on freedom of expression, reflect the failure of institutions to protect the basic rights of Papuan people. Based on Talao (2009) failure to meet basic needs, such as security and recognition, became one of the roots of prolonged conflict. This confirms the importance of building more inclusive and accountable institutions as an important step to prevent further escalation of conflicts.

However, the study also faces some significant obstacles. On the one hand, pressure from international activism has helped draw attention to the issue of Papua, providing opportunities to urge the government to take progressive measures. On the other hand, the dominant militaristic approach and fragmentation at the local level are the main obstacles in creating consensus and sustainable solutions. Other limitations include limited access to conflict areas and media biases that often dominate public narratives.

As a solution, it is important to expand access to the Papua region for independent researchers and develop mixed-methods methodologies to enrich analysis. Collaboration with international institutions can also help minimize political bias in data collection. These measures are expected to contribute significantly to understanding the Papua conflict in a more depth and seeking a fair and inclusive solution.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Literature study revealed that military intervention in Papua since 1969, although intended to maintain stability, exacerbates social conflicts, causing human rights violations, psychological trauma and mass displacement. Local resistance has evolved from armed struggle to international advocacy involving Papuan diaspora, NGOs and churches. By combining theories of militarization, internal colonialism and critical security, the study confirms that the coercive approach creates a cycle of hard-to-disconnect violence, highlighting the need for a approach based on transitional dialogue and justice. Despite its

historical and theoretical contributions, the study is limited to secondary data and has not fully represented the views of the Papuan people, so further field research is needed in the future.

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